

the Atari

JOURNAL

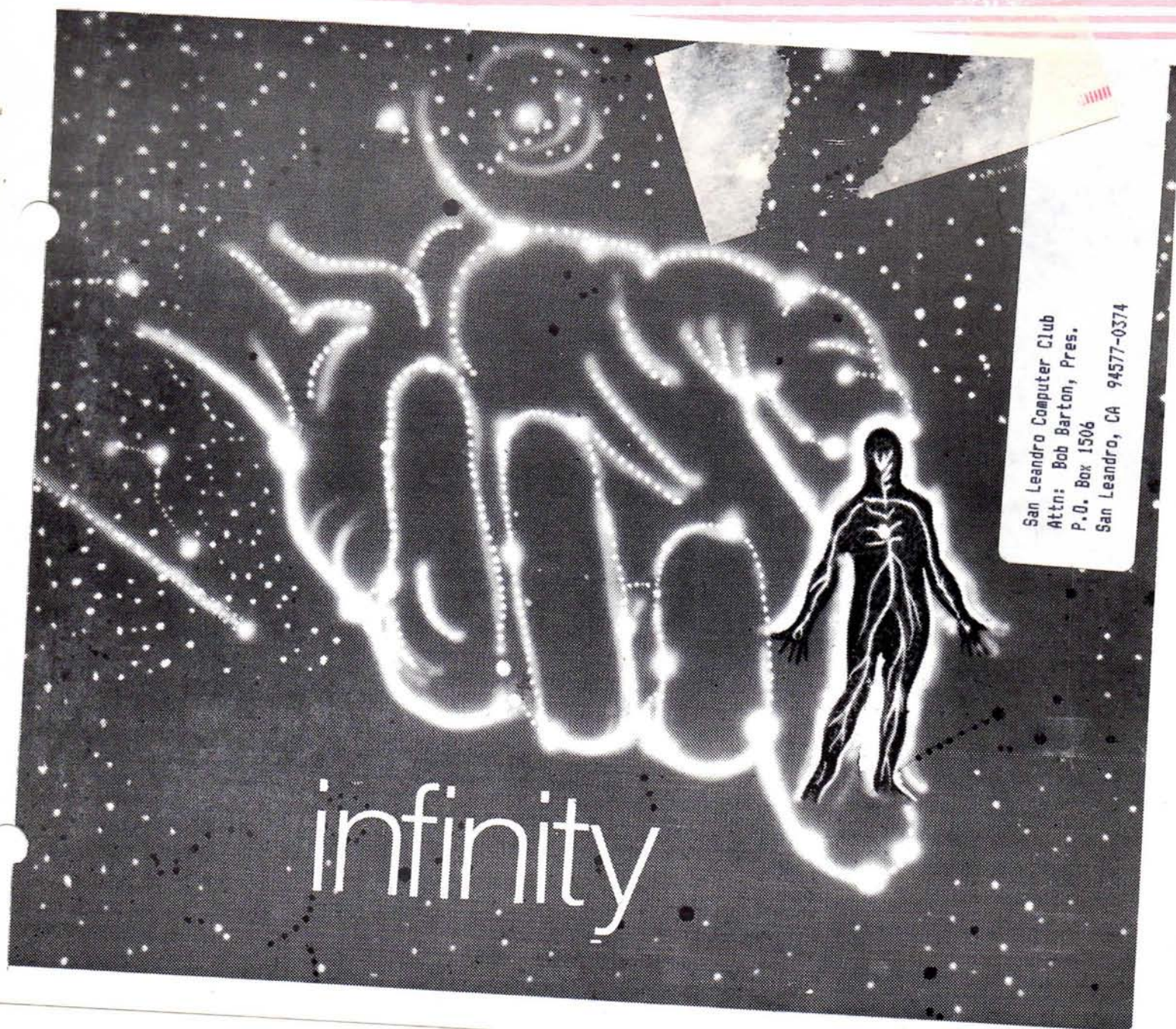
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Volume II, Number 9

FIRST CLASS

November, 1987



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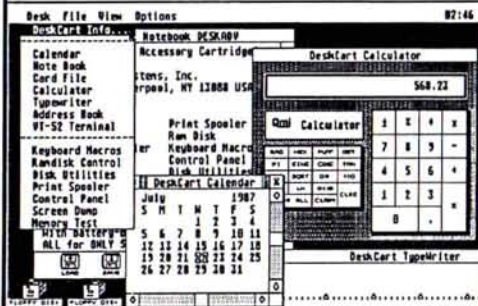
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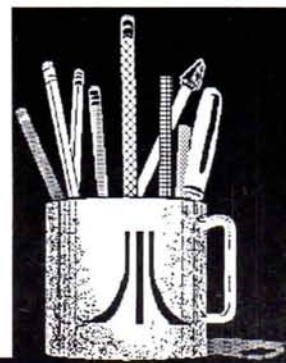
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From the Editor's Desk



LADEEEEEZZZ and GENTLEMENNNNN...

Yessir, step right up folks...it's SHOWTIME! By the time you read this, COMDEX/Las Vegas will probably be history, and Atari will have most likely shown us some new "eyewash". It should be interesting to see how closely they manage to stick to their new policy of "no product will be shown before its time". They are expected to show a "Transputer-based" machine, developed at no cost to Atari, and this machine will likely result in another flurry of attention for Atari, before everyone realizes that it's not going to be "the" machine of our dreams.

In spite of our complaints about this sort of treatment, I see merit to it. It allows Atari to garner some publicity, at little or no cost to a tightly-run company, while sampling a greater market than you and I represent. It's tough for us to recognize that the majority of the people in this world don't know, nor care, about "them durned computers"! (In light of the recent stock market fiasco, one wonders if it's safe for a computer-literate person to stick one's head out into the light!)

On a local basis Atari continues to underwrite different Atari "Fests", where those same folk might see one of these "wonder machines" up close, and learn that they don't always bite! If you want to "help our cause", you should be certain to talk these shows up with your neighbors, classmates, business associates, or anyone else that you might deal with on a day-to-day basis. It will help all of us to be recognized by those people, as well as helping to sell a few more of our favorite marque of machine! Rumor is that Atari will begin to cut down on the number of these shows that they are directly involved with, and next year will not likely see the same level of intensity. That's understandable, as these folks have done a job that is "above and beyond", and they are now beginning to experience "burn-out".

We're beginning a new column this month, "The Foreign Correspondent", and hope that it will become a regular. The author, David Hona, is a resident of New Zealand, and is privy to an entirely different perspective, I think, than we are here in the U.S. As such, I expect that you will find his comments refreshing. Welcome, David!

The JOURNAL continues to "dabble" in the various choices offered us by this wonderful new resource, "desktop publishing" (DTP), and one of those choices is in the area of paper. This issue, as last, is being printed on a coated stock, and I've received quite a few nice compliments, for which I thank you. Unfortunately, due to both production costs, and those of mailing, I've elected to return to bond paper for the next issue, rather than raise my prices. I hope that you will agree with this choice, and understand that in what I hope to be the not-too-distant future, I intend to return to this, or a similar paper. Thanks for your understanding.

Seeya! [Jack]



The

Adventurer

by Sara H. Groves

This time you get answers first; namely those I asked Firebird in last month's issue. A gentleman by the name of Phil Pratt called, and gave us the following information. First, SKU stands for "Stock Keeping Unit" and represents one title per computer. For instance, **GUILD OF THIEVES** is shown on my list as being available for the ST, and 5 other machines. That's 6 SKU's. Generally, it's sort of a technical term they use that we needn't worry about.

Second, they do try to keep some sort of "method" in their distribution, but are dependent upon when the software is released from England. This is frustrating, but does tend to result in a top quality product, at least in the Premium Line.

Third, is there someone we can contact for technical questions? Well, a gentleman by the name of Fred Kjellander popped up on CompuServe recently. He's the Head of Customer Service/Technical Support and was very helpful. Now, I'm putting in a 'plug' for Firebird to get him [and/or anyone else who'd like to become deluged with questions] a CIS account. I can guarantee that we'll keep the questions coming as Firebird software is fast becoming one of the most popular companies we have. Keep up the good work but we need access!! In addition,

Mr. Pratt also expressed his willingness to help in whatever ways he could.

Speaking of access, Fred just sent me the hint sheets for **KNIGHT ORC**. This is especially helpful, because there are currently four of us totally stuck on the first part of this three-part game, and we're going nowhere. Maybe we can do something about that now...Thanks Fred!! Art, Lee, Allan, and I, ALL appreciate it a LOT! **KNIGHT ORC** is Firebird's latest release. Written by Level 9 software and available for the ST only, right now. An 8-bit version may be in the works, but it is not listed on my sheets. It has some very different watercolor-style graphics, the usual enlightening novel (honest), three separate parts, and quite a number of different features including magic, but no built-in hints. First, you play an orc. Now I knew that orcs weren't very admirable creatures, but never realized quite HOW revolting they really are! This means you get to try every low, vile, gross, or disgusting idea you ever had, and it may just be the right one. Second, you must coordinate a band of different creatures in order to succeed. Third, is the "oops" command. Check the docs on it, but I think it's going to be a real winner! Personally, I LOVE it! Fourth, this one's old-fashioned *tough* which is a refreshing change. Fifth, it's funny. I'll tell

you a bit more about it when I get further into it but, for now, I do recommend it.

Infocom just dropped a bombshell on us. [And on Amiga owners too, in case any of you were thinking of investing.] They will no longer fully support the ST (or the Amiga) with a full line of their games, and the Atari 8-bits will be phased out. Their official line is that 8-bit owners simply don't buy very many of their games, and that the ST owners want games that more fully utilize their machine's capabilities. "The demand isn't there until they have graphics." [This includes music on the Amiga in case you were wondering.] "They just didn't sell."

The ST, for instance, accounts for "less than 1%" of their total sales and IBM (The largest market for games in general.) averages a 100/1 ratio to ST sales. Interestingly, they also commented that the 8-bit technology is "holding up the evolution of the medium." The current status is as follows:

A) *The bottom line is that Infocom games for Atari computers just don't sell. Each machine accounts for less than 1% of the total sales of Infocom games.*

B) **PLUNDERED HEARTS** is available for both machines and **NORD** and **BERT** is available for the ST, but **ONLY** if you order direct from Infocom either by calling 1-800-262-6868 in the US,

(continued...)

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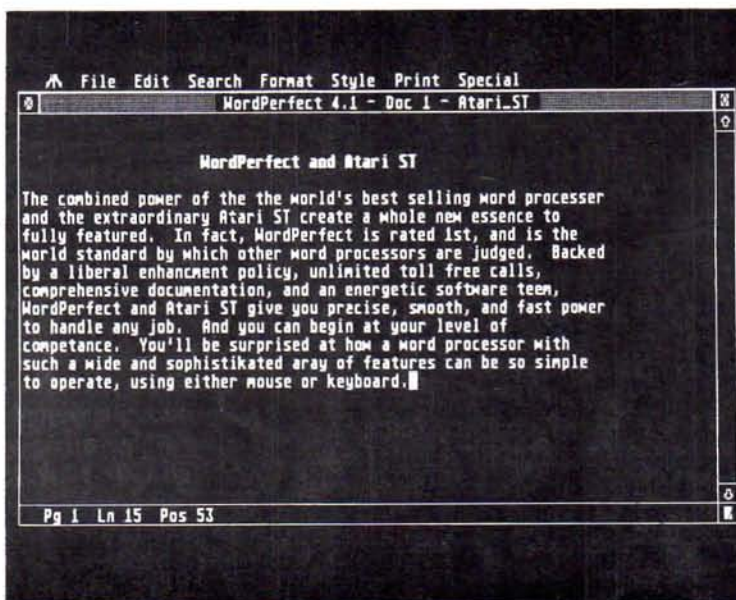
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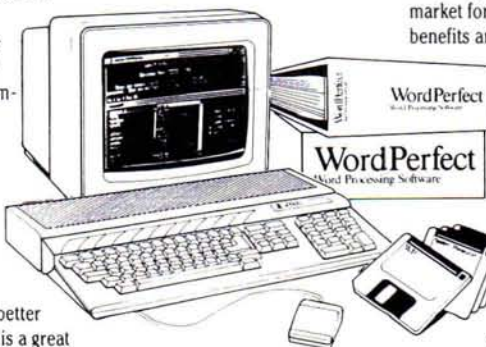
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C O R P O R A T I O N

The Adventurer (continued...)

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You cannot buy them from your dealer or from any other mail order source.

C) **BEYOND ZORK** will be available for the ST. (It has graphs, on-screen mapping, and is an enormous game. More about it later.)

D) "The availability of future titles on the ST and Amiga will be decided on a one-by-one basis. If the Powers-That-Be think a title will do well on those machines, it will be published (though perhaps by mail-order only). This would include products that use the capabilities of the hardware unusually well. It would NOT include traditional text adventures, for the most part. Such titles will NOT be available on the ST or Amiga, even by mail-order."*

E) Anyone who wants to order 1000 or more copies of any title on any machine for which a driver already exists, will be accommodated. Drivers exist, if similar types of games have been produced for the hardware in the past. You cannot, for instance, order 1000 copies of Trinity for the 8-bit Atari, but you could order most any past or future game for the ST or any small size game for the 8-bits.

There has been a great deal of controversy concerning one specific sales figure which was given to me by Cynthia Weiss, Director of Public Relations at Infocom. The figure is "less than 100 copies of a given title for either the ST or the 8-bits." I called to check, and while it has happened, they will not confirm it as an average. On the other hand, they do not deny it. This number does not compensate them for the labor involved in processing it through the driver and copying the disks, the materials cost (disks, labels, packaging, etc.),

distribution, and the ill will of distributors and dealers when it doesn't sell. The controversy was so heavy that I decided to check a bit further. I checked with a representative of another game company and he was mildly surprised but not enough to suggest I recheck the figures. Next, I called the SPA [Software Publishers of America] and Ken Wasch informed me [for publication] that the ST has a .6% overall market share. [Actually, he said .06% for

the ST and .05% for the Amiga which he said add up to 1.1%. The math doesn't work, as you can easily see, so I have assumed he meant .6 rather than .06. Right. *Slightly over HALF of ONE percent.*] Recently, I was reading an article in which a game company software executive was incredibly excited and pleased about one of their titles having gone "Silver". It's an SPA award and a distinction that few games receive. It means that the total sales on all machines for that game was over 50,000. Multiplying this out means that the ST sales were, as an average, about 300. Whoopee. But there's another problem: The .6% figure was for ALL software, but we were talking about games, and ST owners buy more 'serious' software than they do of games, and far fewer than the average Infocom games. In addition, very few pieces of software qualify for the prestigious Silver Award. Oh. Hmm. Maybe that figure of 100 wasn't so low after all.

The problem I run into is that the sales figures don't jibe with the number of people playing a given game. Infocom is reluctant to point at anything other than what their research shows [that their games don't utilize the machine's enormous capabilities], but it certainly is clear that something else is going on. Certainly a part of the problem is distribution. Ever since **BUREAUCRACY** came out, there's been a problem all over the country. A guy in San Francisco complained that he couldn't find the IBM version. In Detroit only the ST version was available. In Miami only the ST version was not available. In addition, there are those who own more than one brand of machine. Often they will reserve the ST for games or other applications which use more of its capabilities, and play Infocom games on their old Apple or their IBM, etc. Unfortunately, this cannot account

(continued...)

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The Adventurer (continued...)

for the enormity of the problem, or the fact that there seem to be a lot more people playing on a given machine than Infocom's sales figures can account for.

By now, you all know what I think the problem is. Maybe I'm paranoid or exaggerating. Well, it might help to look at an example. Let's start small. Some guy in Anywhere, USA goes to the store and buys an Infocom game. That night he and a couple of friends start working on it. Pretty soon they get stuck but they're not sure when they'll be able to get together again, maybe not until next weekend, so in addition to the legitimate backup copy the guy who bought it has, they make two more copies for each one of the others to take home. They work on it at home, and a couple of days later, a friend visits one of them, and is given a copy. Later, this person is talking to a friend who's moved out of town, and so it gets uploaded to the friend's bulletin board. Well, it's not a very big board but it gets a few callers and a week or two later it's been dl'd by 15 or 20 people. Turns out one of the downloaders was out searching for stuff for his bbs and up it goes onto another board, a bigger one this time, so it gets 30 or 35 dl's in a week or so. By the time 3 or 4 weeks have gone by, it's on a handful of bbs's (10 or 12) with an average of, say, 15 dl's each, in addition to those who have passed on copies to friends directly. Oops.

Now we're talking rather large percentages without passing anywhere near the bounds of credibility or even looking at large figures. That's the problem with machines like the ST or the Atari 8-bits. The total potential market is so small that the percentages rise astronomically without correspondingly large numbers, and we never once mentioned the huge distribution networks. There are some very sophisticated networks specializing in unauthorized software, but the scope of the

problem is clear without even considering them.

An interesting message popped up on Gamers' recently. One of our newer members was talking about various games, and things were progressing in the normal fashion, when he suddenly commented that he had, in addition to the game he was currently playing, a pirated copy of another [he named it but I forget which one it was], but didn't yet have any docs because his mother had them at work so she could Xerox them for him. How nice. I wondered if she also sews big pockets on the inside of his jackets so he'll have plenty of nice new clothes and toys.

How does any parent justify helping their child to steal?

The bottom line is that Infocom games for Atari computers just don't sell.

I have debated for quite a while whether to put in the following campaign. My concern is that, if Infocom should change its mind but find their sales figures unchanged, our lack of general support will be cast in concrete forever. However, having pointed out the problems, I'm sure you too, understand what is involved, and what can happen if there is abuse.

Three of the Forums on CompuServe [Atari16, Gamers', and AmigaForum.] have started a letter-writing campaign to Infocom in an effort to convince them that there really is a market for their games on those machines. For this to be effective, we need to make certain that our letters are

thoughtful, and address the problems that Infocom has. For instance, if you have not been buying Infocom games because your dealer had difficulty getting them [not applicable to Nord and Bert or Plundered Hearts but otherwise one of the better reasons], you just bought your machine last week and planned to stock up in the future, or you haven't been enthusiastic about specific aspects of their more recent games, tell them so. The main idea is to convince them that there is an untapped market, which, if certain problems within their control are remedied, will increase the sales to a profitable level. One comment which has been made more than once, is that increased hardware sales would be a specific reason for Infocom to rethink their position.

Please make sure that you understand their current policy before you write. In addition, please do not write if you merely want to let off steam [Letters sent to EA addressed to "Drip Dorkins" were specifically counter-productive], or if you do not plan to buy your software from a legitimate source. We simply do not need to have letters showing Atari owners off as lunatic crackpots, or pirates. The reputation as a "game machine", and the low hardware sales volume are enough problems -- we don't need to add to them.

The address is:

INFOCOM
125 Cambridge Park Drive
Cambridge, MA 02140

BEYOND ZORK is/was due to ship on October 15th, and the ST version will be available to dealers, as was customary in the past. Written by Brian Moriarty, who also wrote TRINITY and WISHBRINGER, BZ is a new and very different chapter in the series, rather than a sequel to Zork III. It is larger in size and scope than the

(continued...)

The Adventurer (continued...)

entire Zork Trilogy. You are an innocent adventurer who finds the G.U.E. plunged into chaos. The wizards who formerly kept order have mysteriously disappeared, rampaging monsters rule the streets, and civil disorder has spread across the land. You have been sent by the few remaining enchanters to reclaim and hide the fabled Coconut of Quendor.

BEYOND ZORK boasts a slew of new features, most of which are firsts for an Infocom game. It has certain elements normally associated with role-playing games, such as monster fighting, bartering, magic, and the ability to choose your character attributes (strength, endurance, compassion, luck, intelligence, and dexterity). In addition, these attributes increase as you gain experience, and do battle with enemies. It allows you the option to choose bar charts showing your location and inventory, as well as an on-screen map which allows you to chart every move. You can also choose not to have them on your screen. There are programmable function keys for frequently-used commands, a four-color screen display, optional mouse control for movement, and an "undo" command. You can even name your own monsters and objects to increase the game's vocabulary.

Nevertheless, BEYOND ZORK is still an Infocom game. You still type in sentences and get sentences back, your main goal is still to solve puzzles, and "There are no representational pictures at all; no animated dragons or axe-shaped blobs of color. 95% of the information is still presented as TEXT. Of course, the new programmable windows and function keys make all this a lot friendlier than before."* Still, Brian's an RPG fan and it should appeal to a much wider audience than many of their earlier games.

*Brian Moriarty

Question Time:

Leisure Suit Larry: *Do I need the pills, and if so, how do I get them?*

A. You need them, but you're probably not far enough along in the game to have the means. There's a useful item close at hand, but you also need something to keep you from falling onto the sidewalk.

Guild of Thieves: *Someone told me they had heard about a certain item which would save a whole lot of time and effort in this game, but couldn't remember what it was.*

A. I don't want to talk about it, since I didn't hear about it until after I'd finished the game. <sigh> Oh well. There's a certain "good luck charm" lurking quietly, where you might expect to find such an item. It's not a rabbit's foot either, and you don't want to hang it over your door. In this game, it would probably fall on your head.

Lurking

Horror: *What's with the brick wall, and the hole with the rod? It seems like I need to bring more equipment down there but it won't fit.*

A. Look carefully through the hole you made, and think about your map and what might be on the other side. That's not lab equipment you see in there, it's heavy machinery. Normally, such things have safety interlocks to prevent you from getting in

there, but the ones in this game don't work. With all that power, you ought to be able to make a nice big hole for yourself.

Bureaucracy: *How do I get money? I have a check, but it's negative and I can't seem to alter it.*

A. Well, the tellers at the bank have all sorts of bureaucratic rules they have to follow, but there's no reason you have to follow them as well. And, of course, if there's no rule for it, they'll have to bend the circumstances to fit whatever rule comes closest. Use it to your own advantage.



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Foreign Correspondent: The Kiwi Connection



By David Hona

Hello! This is my first of what the editor and I hope to be a regular column in the "JOURNAL" of my experiences with, and thoughts on, the ST, and computers in general. It's also a platform for me to share my personal opinions [and not necessarily the publisher's!] and views. I hope you may find something of interest in this and future columns!

This issue, I thought I would tell you a little about myself. I live in the city of Tauranga, in a small country called New Zealand - you may already have heard of it (No? Get your world atlas out NOW and look it up!).

In case you are wondering about the title of this column, a Kiwi is nocturnal native bird of New Zealand. The residents are also called 'Kiwis', as a sort of national nickname, and New Zealand is sometimes called 'Kiwiland.'

Most people who have heard of New Zealand, associate us with

what we export to the rest of the world...Kiwifruit, wool, dairy products and other primary products. Some also know us from a few famous Kiwis' that are well-known in some overseas countries, such as Sir Edmund Hilary, the first man to climb to the summit of Mount Everest.

I am a programmer, but I have not yet really gotten into any serious work with my ST. I work with the "Pick" operating system, which is a rival to Unix, both are mini-computer operating systems, that are often compared, in the same way that MS-DOS and GEM/Macintosh/MS-Windows often are. That is, an old-fashioned, crude operating system compared to a sophisticated, yet powerful, environment.

The 'window, icons, mouse and pull-down menus' (or WIMP) environment of the GEM, Macintosh and MS-Windows are to easy to learn, flexible and, to use

the jargon - 'user friendly'. Anyone who has had the misfortune of using Mess-DOS will tell you that the 'A>' system prompt is as friendly as a charging bull! Admittedly, MS-DOS is flexible to some extent, but not what I call powerful. It is essentially a remnant of the early days of microcomputing. Unfortunately for us, IBM dusted it off and packaged it with their now infamous PC (depending upon whom you talk to), and put the microcomputer industry back several years in the process.

I probably should explain how I came to write this column. It all started a couple of months ago, when I got my modem. At first, I accessed a number of Bulletin Board Systems in New Zealand, and accumulated a large long-distance phone bill in the process! Unfortunately, we ST users are still few and far apart over here, and while I belong to three Atari users' groups, I was not

(continued...)

The Foreign Correspondent:... (continued...)

satisfied in my quest for knowledge with my ST!

I use 'Flash', a popular telecommunications program, that also comes with a free subscription, and introductory access-time credit, to CompuServe (CIS). When I first bought Flash, I didn't expect that I would actually use the subscription.

I initially thought of logging-on to the local bulletin-board and maybe a few long-distance calls to other BBS's in New Zealand. However, after a few enquiries with Telecom NZ, the local phone company, I signed up for a subscription to the Packet Switching Network (Pacnet). It's our version of Tymnet, Telenet, DataPac etc., and enables access to the International Packet Switching Network.

A couple of weeks after applying, I was contacted by Telecom. They asked me to return a form they were sending for a Network User ID/password. I eagerly awaited the form, and duly returned it, posthaste! A week or so later, I had another read of the Pacnet instruction booklet they sent me, and had go at logging on. No joy!

I also remembered that I needed CompuServe's Network User Address (NUA), and since I didn't know anyone who knew what it was, I rang CompuServe. Unfortunately, if you live outside the US, you can't use the long-distance-free "800" numbers! After I had been put on 'hold', and 'brain-washed' by a sort of 'message-while-u-wait' telephone answering machine, preaching against the proposed FCC (Federal Communications Commission) charges, a pleasant (human) voice finally answered!

Before I could ask my question, this voice requested my CompuServe ID number and name, which I provided. Now, I carefully explained what I wanted. "Hmmm...I'm not sure.

I'll have to ask my supervisor. I'll call you back, when I've found out the answer, ok?" (GREAT! I won't have to wait! Big long-distance bill mounting here!)

So I provided my phone number, hung up the phone, and waited for the return call. Fifteen minutes later I heard, "Sorry, but we don't have a NUA or anything like that, but we DO have this phone number for a person in New Zealand with Telecom, for you to try." (what?)

"...my Pacnet password had been mistyped by Telecom, so it was impossible for me to use."

Why didn't I try Telecom first? Being a large organisation, it is extremely difficult to find the right person to talk to, especially if you are talking to a telephone-directory operator, trying to find a number for anybody in Telecom who deals with computer modems etc. "Sorry, can you repeat that again? A computer what?"

Well that day, I got the right person, thanks to CompuServe, who supplied me with all the NUA access numbers to CIS that they knew. Now, who would like to place a bet on how long it would have taken, if I had not rung CIS?

I would say at least a couple more long-distance calls, and a couple of weeks!

Now that I had the CIS access numbers, could I go on-line! No? Unfortunately not, my Pacnet password had been mistyped by Telecom, so it was impossible for me to use. Sigh. Yet another call to Telecom.

A little diversion

Things were not looking very promising. At the time, I was helping a fellow member of the Tauranga Atari Users' Group, with the transfer of his AtariWriter text files to IBM 5.25 inch PC disk format. Jack Harrison-Smith, is semi-retired and keeps busy, writing books among other things. For the last couple of years, he had been quite content with his Atari 130XE, 1027 printer, 1050 drive and AtariWriter.

Jack had become accustomed to the machine's and the software's shortcomings, but his publisher had told him that he would have to supply all future books on IBM-PC format disks. Neither Jack nor his publisher knew that Atari DOS 2.5 was not PC format, or even anything remotely like it!

Someone had told him that it was possible to transfer these files over, but who knew how? That's where I came into the picture. He had made a few enquiries and I was recommended by everyone he spoke to! Always ready to help a fellow Atarian, I eagerly agreed to see if I could help.

I explained that the procedure we were going to perform was what he would have to do every time he had to send a disk away. The problem was that he had a lot of files in Atari format disks, in the form of ATASCII text and VisiCalc spreadsheet files.

It didn't take Jack long to decide to buy a IBM PC-compatible!

Basically, all I needed was a serial interface for Jack's 130XE. Jim Newman, Jack's son-in-law had a PC available, and ready to accept the file transfer. No one in our users' group had a suitable serial interface, so Jack bought one locally. Another club member supplied 'RTERM' for the 130XE, since the software supplied with the interface never worked. At the PC end, we used 'Procomm' (a 'shareware' terminal program,

(continued...)

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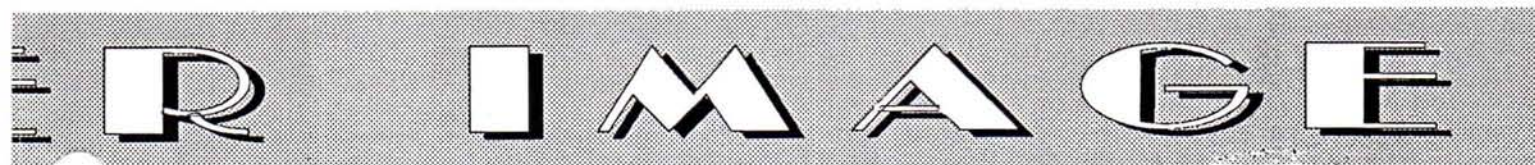
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The Foreign Correspondent:... (continued...)

which is no match for 'Flash'). The link between the two computers was a serial RS-232C cable and a null modem connector.

Now we had the physical link up and running, but there were problems with setting both terminal programs' parameters. After some trial and error, we progressed from transferring the files at 300 bps to 19,200 bps. Because the two computers were 'hard-wired', we could without many errors, use the highest speed available.

After showing Jim how to transfer the files, I left him to it. Now, Jack has his PC-compatible, his trusty 130XE, and is hoping to sell the latter when he's satisfied with the all the file transfers.

Back to CompuServe

Jim Newman was interested in modems, so I lent him mine for a couple of days. It also just so happened that Telecom had corrected the problems with my Pacnet account, so it was ready to go! I called Jim, and told him the good news, and then I went over to his house and dialed up Pacnet (a local call), entered the necessary passwords, then one of the CIS access numbers. About thirty seconds later, I was ON-LINE to CIS!!! (About time, too!)

The initial sign-on was a REAL drag, but I answered each question as prompted, in eager anticipation of things to come. In no time I was allowed to use the service...first stop 'Antic On-line.' Next, 'Atari-16' forum. Jim wanted to see something about Wordstar 2000, so I joined the PC forum too! This was fun!

After a couple of weeks of using CompuServe and long since exhausting my \$15 free time credit, I saw a interesting message in the Atari-16 Forum. It was from Jack Durre' about GDOS and Postscript.

I, uncharacteristically, felt strongly enough about the subject to comment to Jack about the situation, as I saw it!

Since then, Jack and I have become regular correspondents via CompuServe's Easyplex electronic mail system!

One day, I asked Jack what the 'Journal' was, that was often mentioned on the Atari-16 Forum. He offered to send me a free copy, which he did, and I enjoyed reading it. He also 'volunteered' me to write a regular column in The JOURNAL, about Ataris in New Zealand, so, here I am!

PostScript vs. GDOS

Both Jack and I, in case don't already know it, are not big fans of Ataris' GDOS. Sure, it has some merits, but creating your own standards just won't work. Unless, of course, you happen to named IBM or Apple.

GDOS may have many merits, but it represents a futile attempt to establish yet another "standard". As I see it, we wouldn't be in so much of a dilemma of PostScript versus GDOS, if Atari had, from the outset, incorporated GDOS as an integral part of GEM/TOS, much as Apple has with the Macintosh's QuickDraw routines. Because it is not resident in the operating system, like QuickDraw, programmers are not so 'obliged' to use GDOS.

PostScript is what is known as 'device-independent'; it is also 'transportable' between computers. As a result of these qualities, it becomes a "desirable standard". For all it's advantages, PostScript in its' present form is designed primarily for output to high-resolution laser printers. Although the prices of laser printers is gradually falling, they may still be out of the reach of the average ST owner. Especially when you consider that a basic PostScript laser printer would cost at least four times the cost of a ST!

So where does that leave the average ST owner with a Epson-compatible dot matrix printer? Stuck with GDOS! I think that GDOS will be around for

at least the foreseeable future, but, with Atari these days - who really knows what going on!?

I was talking to the system operator (Sysop) of the Adobe Forum on CompuServe, Esther Kletter (an Adobe employee), and asked if there was any sign of a ST version of Adobe Illustrator. This program, along with the likes of CricketDraw, by Cricket Software, uses PostScript to produce fantastic graphics. Unfortunately, they're presently available only on the Apple Macintosh. Esther said, that at present, Adobe is currently working on a PC version, but that she would bring my inquiry to the attention of their programming team.

Adobe Illustrator is, as the name suggests, a illustration and design program. Definitely not a 'paint' program! It utilises PostScript's ability to 'draw' graphics. With a 'paint' program - you draw the picture, and the resulting image is merely transferred from the screen to your printer. The result is a lot of 'jagged' lines or little blocks (pixels) that make up your image. PostScript 'knows how' to draw lines, arcs, circles, etc.

For all you Magic Sac owners, the bad news is that Illustrator requires the 128K ROMs to work properly.

Where to send...

...abuse, rumours, questions, answers, corrections, and preferably, praise, to...

Seriously, if you really would like to discuss any thing I've mentioned in this column I can be contacted on CompuServe, where my PPN is 73637,306 - where I am regularly there on most weekends on the Atari16 Forum. Or write to me in care of the JOURNAL.



External Speaker Jacks for Your ST Monitors

by Rick Leinecker

Author of "Your ST Comes Alive!"

One of the most common questions that I am asked on my BBS has to do with how a person can connect an external speaker to their ST monitor. Sometimes users are experimenting with sound programs, or maybe recording a tune using a music program, or many other, interesting, creative things, and they require a better quality than the ST monitor's small speaker.

The installation procedure is very simple, can be done with very few tools, and should only take fifteen minutes. Once in place, the sound can be sent to an external speaker, into an amplifier, or into a recording device. Unfortunately, in order to correctly match the impedance of the original load, the monitor speaker must be disabled when driving anything with an input impedance less than 100 ohms. In general, this means that while your stereo or recorder can be driven simultaneously with the monitor speaker, another external speaker must be the only speaker connected.

The Monochrome Monitor

I will detail the instructions for both the SM124 (monochrome) monitor and the SC1224 (color) monitor -- First let's start with the SM124.

Begin by disconnecting the power cord, and also the signal cord from the computer. Place the monitor face down on a surface that

will not damage the screen. There are a total of five phillips screws that hold the case together. Two are at the bottom, two are at the top, and one is in the middle near where the power cord goes into the monitor.

Once the five screws are removed, gently slide the case up. The speaker wire will be the only impediment to complete removal of the case. These two wires will probably be white and yellow.

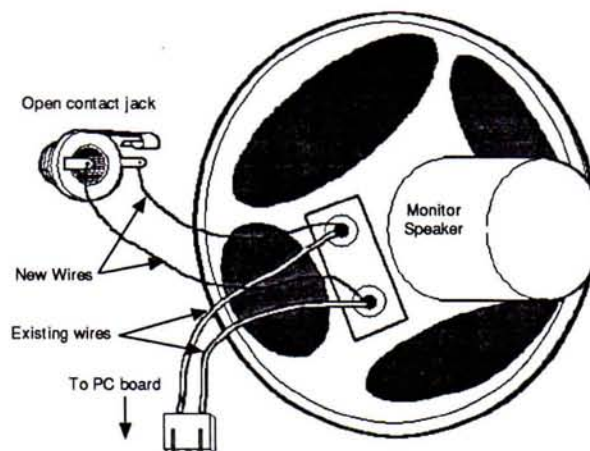


Figure 1 - Open Jack

They are connected to the PC board with a plug. Gently pull this plug away from the PC board being careful not to pull the wires from the plug itself. Now the part of the case which contains the speaker can be taken to your workshop for the installation.

The size of the jack will depend upon what your intended use will be. The two types of jacks that you must choose from are the "open"

type and the "closed type". The open type will allow the monitor speaker to remain in operation while the external device is plugged in. The closed type will turn the monitor speaker off while the external device is plugged in. I would suggest installing one of each type so that you have the availability of both. Remember that for external speakers you need the closed type, while for higher impedance devices you can use the closed type, although the open type will work as well, albeit allowing the built-in speaker to continue to operate.

Drill the holes in your monitor (ouch) in a location as near the speaker as possible, but towards the front of the case. Insert the jack and fasten it in place. To install the open type, solder the ends of two pieces of wire to the speaker, and then to the two tabs of the jack (See Fig. 1).

To install the closed type is a bit more difficult. Let's get a point of reference for this discussion. There is a large tab that holds the plug when it is inserted. Looking at the back of the jack, hold this at the top and consider it as twelve o'clock. (See Fig. 2)

First, unsolder one of the speaker wires and remove from the speaker. Solder this wire (the other end of which goes to the PC board plug) to the tab on the jack that is located at six o'clock. Connect a

(continued...)

External Speaker Jacks (continued...)

wire from the speaker tab that still has a wire going to the PC board plug to the tab on the jack that is located at three o'clock. Finally, to the speaker tab that has had the wire removed, connect a wire to the tab on the jack that is located at nine o'clock.

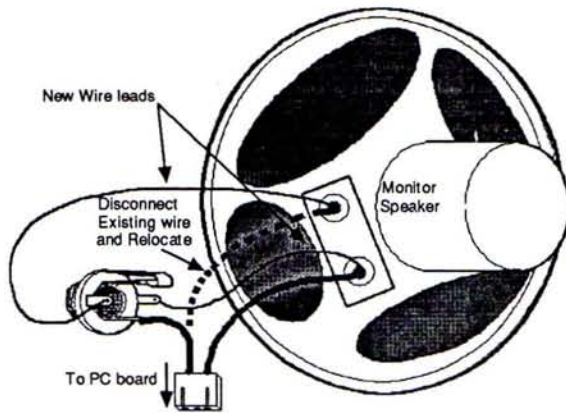


Figure 2 - Closed Jack

To connect both the open and closed types together, begin by installing the closed type first as was previously described. Solder additional wires to the tabs located at three and nine o'clock. These two wires can then be soldered to the tabs of the open type jack. (See Fig. 3)

To complete the job, reconnect the speaker wire plug to the PC board. Gently slide the case back

into place. Install the five phillips screws and you are done.

The Color Monitor

If you are installing a jack in the SC1224 monitor, the procedure will be almost the same. Place the monitor face down on a safe surface. Once again there are only five screws to remove. Two at the top, one in the middle, and two at the bottom. There are another two screws towards the bottom that should not be removed. Be careful that the two screws at the bottom that you do remove, are the closest to the rear

of the monitor.

Gently slide the case off. The speaker is not mounted in the case so you will be able to completely remove it from the chassis. The speaker is mounted to the monitor chassis itself so you will have to run wires from there to the case once your jacks have been installed. Make sure

that you have enough slack wire so that you can reassemble the case easily.

Here are several words of caution though, before you begin. Inside of the monitor there is very high voltage. Never remove the case without first unplugging the power cord. Even with the power cord unplugged, there may be voltage on some of the capacitors. Either allow time for these to discharge, or be extremely careful. The monitor tube is very fragile. Obviously if you drop it it will break. With the case apart though, it may react to impacts in a way that may surprise you. Be sure that you are gentle when handling it.

If you have any questions, please feel free to call the Computer Spectrum BBS and ask. The number is (305) 251-1925, 300/1200 baud.

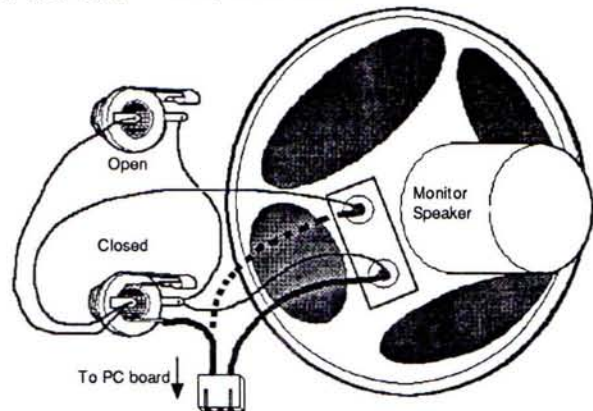


Figure 3 - Combined

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The Beginner's ST

Part 13

by Steve Tearle

Hardcopies...Softheads

Here we go again. The Atari ST computers and printers. This is an endless battle it seems. Every time I log onto a national telecommunications network, there seems to be a new ST owner who posts something to this effect:

TO: ANYONE!

FROM: Joe NewSTowner,
72445,0033

RE: Help Me Please Anyone Oh
Please Read This I Beg You

Can anyone out there help me. I just bought a new Atari ST computer and tried to hook it up to my trusty Zephyr 2000ZXX Type 17B printer. All I get are odd characters printed out. Surely someone out there in Atari ST land can help me. This printer worked just fine with my old CoCo model 1 and Zephyrmaster wordprocessor. Please reply. Please. Erk!

Alright, so I exaggerated just a little teeny-tiny bit. But a lot of "Joes" seem to need a little tutoring on the ST-to-printer connection, so here goes:

The ST computers were well-designed. Rather than buck the system, like our friends at Apple with their Macintosh, Atari decided to 'go with the flow'. Every Atari ST computer comes with a built-in, ready-to-go Centronics parallel printer port. This printer connector is an industry "standard", that accepts inexpensive PC-type printer cables. Atari didn't stop there either. The engineers at Atari knew that the most popular printer being sold in the world today was the Epson. The Epson printer line is so popular in fact, that other printer companies make their printers 'Epson Compatible' (to some extent...more on this later). Therefore, a 'printer driver'

for the Epson printer was built into the Atari ST operating system itself.

A printer driver is simply a program to let the computer communicate with an attached printer. If you have an Epson printer, everything is rosy, and the ST computer will probably work fine with just about any text or graphics program. Screen dumps (printouts of the monitor screen), will work fine from the drop-down menu selection or the Alt-Help key combination. Yep, lucky is the ST owner who has an Epson printer.

But wait! What of all those 'Epson compatible' printers? Many folks own printers that 'emulate' the Epson machines, but just as in the world of computers, an IBM PC-compatible computer is not quite an IBM-PC, and an Epson compatible may not really be an 'Epson', in every sense. Many of these printers may have small quirks that prevent 100% compatibility with the Atari ST. Sometimes the compatibility is almost perfect, as in the case of many of the Panasonic printers. The Epson printers are premium quality printers, and command prices that are premium as well, so the lure of "compatible" printers is understandable. Be careful though; don't be suckered in by low prices and promises of compatibility, ask around, compare, read reviews, and as always, try the printer out first, if at all possible. Sometimes, a printer which seems to work fine with most of the software that you have tried, may still have a problem with certain programs.

Now for the fun part, hooking up printers to the ST that aren't Epsons or Epson compatible. First off, if you have a printer that doesn't have a standard Centronics connector, you have a major

problem. My suggestion would be to start thinking about replacing your printer.

Let's say that you did buy a printer that's not Epson compatible, but has a Centronics parallel port. Well, all hope is not lost, as there are some solutions. First, some programs like PrintMaster, have their own printer drivers built in, so check the software you are using first, you may be pleasantly surprised! There are public domain programs available that allow you to configure a printer driver that will be loaded automatically from the desktop, in an AUTO folder. I use one that looks for any DEGAS or DEGAS Elite printer driver you set it for, and that driver then replaces the Epson printer driver in the ST's operating system when you boot up on that disk. There may also be commercial programs that contain printer drivers, that you can configure for that 'oddball' printer. If you plan on configuring a printer using programs commercially available, be prepared for spending a lot of time with your printer's manual, and lots of time testing and fooling around.

Don't think that the process of getting less popular printers to work with a computer is confined to the Atari ST. Actually, the ST and the IBM computer are the easiest computers that I have ever hooked printers up to. The Apple, Radio Shack, and Commodore computer printer hookups are nightmares! Even ye olde Atari 8-bits had configuration problems.

So cheer up bunky! Things aren't as dark as they seem, all those 'Joe' new St owners out there DO get answers, most of them are even encouraging!



Review:

The Atari SH204 Hard Drive

Atari Corp.

Sugg. Retail: \$699.95

There comes a time in the life of every ST user when he or she will get tired of searching through piles of floppy disks, looking for the right stuff. Before the SH204, 20-megabyte mass-storage device, I'd always thought of a hard drive as the Florida to Texas run with the A/C broken. Somebody told me that it wasn't a trip, but rather a Winchester, which made me wonder if someone had taken the law into their own hands on the piracy issue. I asked that person what they were driving at and they told me that in order to get my data in order, I needed to get a hard disk. (A girlfriend of mine once said something to the same effect as I sat in front of her, floppy disk in hand.)

I did a lot of research before deciding on the SH204. *Computer Shopper* had scads of hard disk drives, most of them in the \$200 to \$300 price range. This raised a giant question in my mind: If the Atari has a built-in hard disk controller, which is supposed to cut the cost of having one in your hard drive, how come the SH204 runs in the \$500 to \$600 price range? I set out to on a quest to find the answer, using all of the tools available to a modern man in the computer age.

My first stop was the Atari 16-bit forum on CompuServe. Not surprisingly, assorted messages had been left on the subject and most of them were negative. "You can't have more than 40 folders [sub-directories] on it," said one. "Supra fixed that problem with an autoboot file," said another. "Does

the Supra autoboot file work with the Atari drive?" asked the first. "I don't know. I don't think so," replied the second. I started to feel paranoid.

My next stop was the Atari BBS in Sunnyvale. There was a large discussion between some fellows (kind of like two morons discussing nuclear physics) concerning the fact that hard drives for the PC compatibles were less expensive and what did "Power Without the Price" have to say to that. The subject of the 40 folder limitation was brought up, as well. The official company response was something to the effect that the hard drives were less expensive for the clones because they had neither a power supply (they connect to the bus in the machine and siphon power from the CPU's power supply), nor a controller (that's usually a \$200 extra). Not to mention the case and the high quality of the Atari drive. The 40 folder limit is only a problem if you *access* 40 folders in a session.

This raised another giant question in my mind: How on earth did they fit a bus into that small box? (I told myself that there was a connection here to be made between buses and hard drives.) Anyway, the explanation was logical enough and I found out later that a bus is not something you drive, it's something you ride; in computer terms, your data has to ride the bus to work from it's residence in memory. That also explained another question I'd had about the term "resident in RAM." (Although it raised another

mind-boggler about why they didn't just give the data a car? I guess that's why computers are so inexpensive these days, the data has to take public transportation.)

With all of this good research under my belt, I set out for my local computer store and told them to order me a 10-no-make-it-20 meg hard drive from Atari. They stared down their long, hard noses at me and asked, point-blank, "What are you going to do with 20 megs?" I hadn't thought of an answer to this question, yet. (I wasn't sure I'd even met one Meg, let alone twenty. I'd had a Sally, a Gena, and an Eve, but no Meg... Where do they get these terms? Come on over and give Meg a bite!) I quickly improvised an impromptu response: "I want a 20 meg hard drive. I have a right to a 20 meg hard drive. *Order me a 20 meg hard drive!*" All activity in the store ceased, and silence fell. I began to feel a nervous perspiration seeping up around my collar as I realized I had shouted the last sentence. Somewhere in the background a salesman whispered, "An Atari computer with a hard drive? No, that would put it in the business machine league!"

To make a long story short, I received my SH204 about three weeks later. The store had ordered a bunch of stuff from Atari and asked for hard drive to be shipped via Red Label (e.g. overnight express) and the other stuff via regular slow-boat. The other stuff arrived overnight and I waited three weeks for my drive. They had even ordered a second one, just in case someone saw mine and decided they needed to keep up with Bob Balay. (Don't have to hit me over the head with a brick to make me realize I'm a trend setter around here!)

Anyway, I got the darn thing, and was just as disappointed as I could be with the looks of the ugly, pigeon-white, box. I took it home, despite my disappointment, and

(continued...)

The Atari SH204 Hard Drive (continued...)

unwrapped it from the shock-proof container. (Something about shock-proofing gives you a great sense of value for whatever it is that is shock-proofed. A \$650 price tag has a tendency to do that, as well!)

I rearranged my multitudinous cables and such, and proceeded to attempt to connect my hard drive to my 520 ST. My first thought was, "This thing is too ugly to display next to the aesthetic contours of my beautifully-sculpted keyboard, so I'll put it on the floor." WRONG! The cable is only about 18 inches long to ensure reliable data transfer between the drive and the computer. "Sure," I told myself, "it's short because they couldn't get a transfer on the bus and didn't want to pay for another bus ride." (See, I got these things fingered out!)

I was thus forced to place the squat box next to my keyboard, and when I did, an amazing transformation took place! Instead of just the sheer, aesthetic pleasure of the keyboard, I now had beauty and the box! Its thin lines traveled back under my computer desk like the perspective lines on a renaissance painting. The whole arrangement screamed, "POWER!"

After following the procedures on formatting and partitioning the drive into several logical drives, the moment of truth came. I rebooted the system and *nothing happened*. The fan on the hard drive was going, and the desktop came up, but only drives A and B were showing! Then, I found out that you have to have the boot disk in drive A and I felt another sweep of disappointment. What good is a hard drive that you can't boot your system from? Later research confirmed the notion that Atari engineers were working on a solution to this problem.

In any event, I got it to work, finally, and was quite pleased with the overall performance. Disk input and output time decreased dramatically. Flash!, which used to

take in the neighborhood of a minute to load, now takes about twenty seconds, if that. Compiling programs, which used to be a lengthy chore, (I once took in a movie and went to McDonald's for a burger and came back just in time to see it finishing up) now takes one fifth of the time. And, I can actually get a problem solved in a day instead of a week. It saves time in another fashion, as well. I don't waste precious minutes rummaging through my floppy disk collection, searching for the right stuff. (It was so bad, that I actually considered writing a program to keep track of my floppies!)

The bottom line? You don't have to be a businessman or a programmer to use a hard disk drive. All you have to do is own forty or more 3.5" floppies. But you'll probably have an easier time justifying the expense of one if you do program, or use programs that are I/O bound (i.e. you spend a lot of time waiting on disk accesses). The speed is impressive, almost like a 20-meg RAM-disk.

Aesthetically, it is an awesome enhancement to a beautifully-designed machine. The major technical problems, at this point, seem to be the lack of an autoboot capability from the hard-drive itself, the 40-folder limitation (for which there is now a fix in the public domain), and the fact that software manufacturers continue to place copy protection schemes on their disks, which prevent you from installing their applications on your hard drive. My mass-storage monolith has given me a whole new outlook on the power of the ST. To go back to floppies now would be like taking the bus after owning a sports-car!

Post script: Atari has since issued a series of programs that will allow you to boot your system from the hard drive. It's in the public domain and it works rather nicely!

-Reviewed by Bob Balay-

LASER PRINTING for your Publishing Partner .DOC files!

If you'd like to produce a professional-looking document, but aren't prepared to pay the high purchase price for a PostScript laser printer, you now have another option!

❖ **The Atari JOURNAL** will accept your "Publishing Partner" .DOC files, either via modem (at 300/1200 baud), or through the U.S. mail. Upon receipt, we are usually able to produce camera-ready copies, and have them on their way back to you within 24 hours!

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❖ We can provide a sharp, clear camera-ready original on smooth, coated paper stock, as well as a bond paper working copy.

❖ While there are other laser printer services available to IBM and Macintosh users, who will deign to "allow" an ST user to make use of their facilities, we are an ST-based firm, and are well-acquainted with the vagaries of this particular system.

❖ We believe in the "personal touch", and prefer to provide voice support and advice by telephone. If you'd like to learn more... GIVE US A CALL!

(305) 382-1900

Review:

EMPIRE

by Interstel

WAR IS HELL! That must be the biggest cliché used to describe mankind's need to conquer and destroy itself -- Well, I have a cliché of my own to use -- NO WAR IS HELL! Like the German war machine on the coast of France, I've laid here, waiting for the eventual invasion to happen...Only I wanted to be conquered.

Well, the invasion has finally hit the beaches, with the release of *Colonial Conquests*, *Great Battles*, and *Empire*. The first two programs deal with the past. *Colonial Conquest* is based on the Imperial expansion of the late 1800's and early 1900's, while *Great Battles* is based on selective battles of the Civil War, and Napoleon's Campaign.

Empire's theme is based on the futuristic conflict between the Krellan Empire and the United Galactic Alliance. If you have played the program *Star Fleet I*, also created by Interstel, then you'll find the story line to be a continuation. If you have seen any of the Star Trek episodes or movies, just substitute Krellan for Klingon and the United Galactic Alliance for the United Federation of Planets.

Empire is a game of planetary conquest. The Krellan Empire has been conquering planets to gain control of the Galaxy. As a General of the United Galactic Alliance, you have been given the task of countering this offensive. The Krellan plan of attack is to transport troops to one or two cities

of a target planet, where they will create an Empire using the planet's own resources and manpower. Using the captured cities, they will begin to conquer more cities, eventually using the captured resources to conquer the planet, and making it a part of the Krellan empire. In order to counter this offensive, you and your forces will also be transported to the planet to create a counterstrike, and regain control of the planet. Once you've conquered the planet, it will be turned over to the Alliance to be converted to a democratic society. "Like handing a girl over to your best friend after your first date". Please note that this review will not discuss the concepts of wargames -- only the setting and characteristics of *Empire*.

Now that you know the setting, it's time for the confrontation -- You've been transported to your initial cities, ready to take on the Krellan Empire. In order to engage the enemy you'll need a battle force, and in order for you to have a battle force, you'll need your cities, of course, to build them. *Empire* is played in the following three phases:

BUILDING YOUR FORCES

Your forces can consist of the following combat units. Troops, fighters, transports, destroyers, submarines, cruisers, battleships, and aircraft carriers. To conquer the planet, you'll need a force consisting of these combat units, and to get them, you'll need to

build them up, and that's where your cities come in. Each city which you capture will produce one of these combat units for your empire, but there's one catch -- There is a turn requirement for each unit and those range from six turns for troops, to 60 turns for a battleship, so if you capture a city on turn 10 and set production for troops, on turn 16, that city will create a troop unit for your empire...BUT NO SOONER!

SEARCH AND CONQUER

Once you've begun producing combat units with your captured cities, you'll need to search the planet for new cities. To capture those cities, you'll need troops. Only your troop units can capture a city, and the problem here is that your troops only move one square per turn. Another problem is that this is a global war meaning there are land masses, as well as water to travel over. Your troops cannot travel over water, as they have no water transportation. To search for new territory, you'll need to build either destroyers or submarines. Once you've built one of these, you can send them out to search for the coastal cities, since these units have greater distance and can quickly locate new cities. Once you've located new cities, you're going to need to transport your troops, and that's where your transports will come in. Each transport built can carry six troop units, and believe me, you're going to need a lot of transports to carry your troops to those distant cities!

DOMINATION

Once you've begun capturing cities, you'll need to build the rest of your fleet to battle the Krellan empire. You should probably take a few cities inside your empire and set production for battleships, aircraft carriers, and fighters. Don't use cities close to the front, or you may run the risk of losing your city and combat unit to a

(continued...)

Empire (continued...)

Krellan offensive. Once you've produced these units, you should begin to create task forces, because once you've located the Krellan empire, you will need to escort your transports during the offensive. If the Krellan's attack, then you'll be able to use the task forces to repel the offensive. There is one rule to follow -- Search for the Krellan empire, and attack before the Krellan's attack you.

If there is one word to describe Empire, it is "playable". My first session with Empire lasted five hours, and I had only explored half of the planet. It took me two more days, or about six hours to finish the battle, and believe me, victory was sweet. Empire was written using the GEM environment, and I must say it is a welcome feature, since using the mouse lets me concentrate on the battle instead of the keyboard. Another nice feature is the choice of players. Empire can be played as human vs computer, using one or two computer opponents. Each computer opponent can be set to either "standard" or "expert" rating, and if two computer opponents are chosen, they will not know of each other, and will fight between themselves and you. Empire can also be played by two or three human opponents, and there is also a play-by-mail feature to allow two human players to play a game, sending a file of the game by mail or modem, after each turn.

With the release of Empire, Interstel has given the Atari ST an excellent wargame that truly lives up to the warning print on the box "WARNING: This program is highly addictive. Considerable otherwise productive time might be lost. Play only during vacation".

-Reviewed by Charlie Chance-

Review:

GRIDIRON! The Football Simulation

by Bethesda Softworks
Distributed Through
Electronic Arts

Sugg. Retail: \$49.95
Requires: 512K, Color Monitor
Double-sided drive (disk can be
exchanged for single-sided.)

Fortunately, by the time the NFL had gone on strike I had already bought this game, and my season was going on without strikes or high salaries. In fact, *the whole league costs less than \$50!* And they play anytime I want them too. Yessir, this is the football game I've been waiting for.

GRIDIRON!, originally released for the Amiga, is the first ST offering from Bethesda Softworks, and they've created a very entertaining and realistic football simulation, so much so that even the editor of this magazine, who claims not to be a gamer, has been known to spend several evenings playing it (an Atari owner who's NOT a gamer... right). *(And there goes my credibility with all the IBM owners who read this! - Ed.)* In these days of \$40+ software that you play for two hours and then never touch again, this game offers very good value for your dollar, because you'll play it again and again. Not to mention the fact that these guys never go on strike!

GRIDIRON! is a combination strategy/action game, giving you the best of both, the strategy of calling and creating your own plays and action of being able to play them out on the field. Although there are some stats involved, it is not a statistics-based game like *NFL Challenge*, but unlike *NFL Challenge* where you call the play and sit back passively and watch the results, GRIDIRON! lets you participate in the action, which for

me is where it's at. You can play against the computer or another person for some head-to-head action. The game is played entirely with the mouse (except in two player mode, where a joystick is used by the second player). The keyboard is used only to enter names for various things as team names or playbooks. According to the users manual, playability of the game was the most important consideration, and this has been achieved by the use of simple but effective graphics, combined with some great digitized sounds. The game uses an animated chalkboard effect, with an overhead view of the field. The players are represented by little circles; a gold team and a black team. By using simple graphics to represent players, the game is able to have full 11-man teams, with each player moving independently, according to his programmed instructions. This makes for some very sophisticated plays. As far as the speed of the game, there are five levels of play, from beginner to pro. While the lower levels are purposefully slower, at the pro level, you must act very quickly, because things move fast.

GRIDIRON! uses the power of the ST to incorporate elements of real football that previous games and machines could not include. There are far too many subtleties to mention here, but I'll point out some of the best features of this simulation.

(continued...)

Gridiron (continued...)

Full 11-man programmable teams

Having a full compliment of players adds to the realism. The standard playbook contains 20 offensive and 20 defensive plays. On offense, you control the ball carrier. The mouse controls a crosshair that you use to control player movement. This makes the passing game real slick because you can sit in the pocket and watch for one of your five eligible receivers to get open, then move the crosshair in the path of the receiver to catch the ball. Don't wait too long to pass, because you may get sacked! Offensive plays include running plays, traps, screens, sweeps, reverses, options, quarterback sneaks and a hail mary. On defense you can be any one of the 11 defenders. Defensive plays include a variety of running and passing formations, man to man and zone formations, blitzes and goal line stands.

The "Player Draft" lets you create teams with individual strength and speed characteristics. Each player is given PAP's or Player Ability points to determine how quick and strong he is. After creating your team, it can be saved to disk.

The PCU or "Play Creation Utility", lets you diagram your own plays and build your own playbooks that can be saved to disk. Each player can be programmed individually. Lineman can be set to run or pass block, running backs and receivers can each be set to run a specific route. Defenders can be set for man or zone coverage, to pursue the ball carrier or to sit back and wait. Not too mention the fact that you can create your own formations as well. For instance, the standard playbook does not have a shotgun play. No problem, just enter the PCU, modify one of the pass plays by moving the quarterback back about five yards and presto! A shotgun.

Realistic Tackle Football

In most arcade football games, when the ball carrier runs into a defensive player, he's tackled. In GRIDIRON!, if the the ball carrier is stronger than the defender, he won't always go down. Sometimes it takes two or three guys to stop a strong runner. It's even possible to break tackles and turn a loss into a big gain, (I once returned a kickoff 108 yards for a TD after breaking two tackles).

A Real Running Game

This is what I've been waiting for. GRIDIRON! offers a very effective running game. It takes time to master handing off to a running back and looking for the holes in the line, but once you do, it becomes a very important part of the game plan, especially on those short yardage situations.

Kickoffs, Punts, Field Goals, Fumbles, Flags, and TD's!

All the extras are here. If you call a play and it looks like the defense has your number, then you can audible and change the play. Of course, the defense can change plays, too. Fumbles are really wild, the ball seems to float away from you and then a mad dash by all 22 players to recover it. Onside kicks, random penalties, time outs, you name it, it's here. And when you score a touchdown.... naaaaaa, I won't tell you, go buy it and find out for yourself.

I Almost Forgot.....

The sound effects! How could I forget? Digitized sounds really add to the excellence of this game. The last strains of the Star Spangled Banner accompanies the title screen, followed by a huge crowd roar. During the game, the quarterback barks out the snap, and the you here the grunting of the lineman and the crashing of the shoulder pads as the teams collide. And when you cross the goal line, turn the volume all the way up, jump out of your chair and do a high five!

Bethesda Softworks enters the ST market with a winner. They have managed to include more elements of real football than any other game I have seen. The only thing missing is an instant replay option. I guess the best thing about this game is that it "feels" good. That's an intangible that really makes the difference between a good game that will last for while, or a great one that you can keep coming back too. If your're a football nut and own an ST, you need this game.

-Reviewed by Dave Webster-

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Review:

"Your ST Comes Alive!"

by Richard Leinecker

Available through:
Paragon Software, Inc.
Retail: \$29.95

For the ST owner who likes to build projects and tinker with electronics, this book is a rare find. Even for the person experienced in electronics, this volume will answer many of the questions that arise when interfacing to an ST computer. You will benefit from reading this book, regardless of your knowledge or ability, because many of the projects are simple to build and understand, the theory behind every chapter is discussed in detail, and ideas for further expansion are given.

The format of the book facilitates the experimenter in the best possible way. Several chapters introduce some essential fundamental concepts. Each chapter thereafter illustrates in detail the theory and construction of a different project. Sample programs are included on a disk, both the source code in C and the compiled programs. Some useful appendices are included at the end of the book.

The first chapter is a general electronics reference section. For those unfamiliar with electronics, these pages will fill in any gaps that the reader might have. For the experienced technician, the electronics reference section will be a handy reference guide that can also be used.

Chapters three through six covered interfacing techniques with four of the ST ports. These are the parallel port, the joystick port, the cartridge slot, and the MIDI port. The hardware needed is illustrated and described along with several useful schematics for each chapter.

The programming techniques are described, and some sample programs are provided on the disk.

The interfacing chapters are general, and provide the only source of its kind for those who wish to use the ST ports for their own purposes. Many ideas for different uses, are provided in these chapters.

Chapter two is a useful chapter that teaches the fundamentals of binary and hexadecimal numbers. Since hardware applications require the use of this knowledge, this particular chapter is invaluable. Chapter seven describes the use of ST BASIC, and how it can be used when interfacing to the ports. All of the sample programs are written in C, so this will be helpful for those who want to convert the projects to BASIC.

One chapter that I particularly enjoyed was the Light Pen chapter, which covered the building of a light pen. A detailed description of monitor and television operation was also covered, so that the project could be fully understood. The actual circuit was fairly simple to build. The programming techniques were not too difficult either, but if I had to dig up the specific routines myself, it would have taken a great deal of effort.

Another project that was interesting was the phone-answering circuit. This device is able to answer a phone call when a ring is detected. The computer then waits for a seven-digit code to be entered from a remote touch tone phone. After this is done[®] successfully, several tasks can be performed. The sample program

has limited capabilities to perform tasks. The demo provided could only change the screen color, ring a bell, or turn a single external device on and off. With some creativity, this phone circuit could be expanded considerably.

ST computers were born without the analog-to-digital converters that the old eight-bit computers came with. The lack of these seriously affects the computers ability to interface with external devices. One chapter covers the addition of an analog-to-digital converter, and then describes several simple projects to demonstrate its use. The circuit can operate from either the cartridge slot or the parallel port, and this adds flexibility.

Two networking systems are illustrated. I envision a bunch of STs networked while playing a complex strategy game, or having some immense battle game going. One of the networking projects is very simple and can be built rather easily. The other system is more flexible, and thus more useful, but it requires a large controlling circuit.

Most ST owners can benefit from reading and using this book, I believe. For the hobbyist, the projects are interesting, easy to understand, fun to build, and, for the most part, useful. For the programmer, there are many programming techniques with respect to the ports that will lend themselves to software development. For the professional technician, this book will be a valuable reference, as it contains a great deal of hard-to-find, and hard-to-ascertain information.

The retail price of the book is \$29.95. I feel that it is well worth the money, considering all of the information that is packed into the book and the sample programs.

-Reviewed by Bob Ruble-

Review:

THE INFORMER

from Regent SOFTWARE

Sugg. Retail: Regent Software
 Trialpak: 7131 Owensmouth
 Full Pkg.: Suite 45A
 Canoga Park, CA 91303

Just possibly, my biggest problem is that I don't have a photographic memory. This may not make sense to you, I know, but it helps if I know where to locate information that I've saved. My main source of info is magazines: *Compute!*, *Antic*, *ST/Log*, or *Current Notes*, (annndddd???...-Ed.) going back several years. To add to my misery, I like to type in programs from these magazines, and this has been a problem for me until now, mainly because I also tend to forget what program I last worked on! It's been tough for me to maintain a list of articles, but a solution to this problem may be available in "The Informer" from Regent Software.

To aid the buyer, Regent Software is now offering a working demo of this new program of theirs, giving the buyer a chance to use a scaled-down version, before laying out big bucks on it. This allows one to find out whether or not it's *the* program for them; it allows them to answer the question, *is this what I want?*

The following is based on the use of "Trialpak", a demo that gives the user the general feel of the program. Trialpak differs, in that it is limited to about 2.8K bytes for data storage. Other than this limitation on size, everything that can be learned through the use of Trialpak, also applies to the Informer, a rather clever method of marketing this new product.

The information is displayed through a spreadsheet format on 1 of 4 different screens or tables. Each table may have as many as 36 columns, which are created from the menu. The maintenance of these tables is handled by the

program, meaning that you can have four tables each, with 36 columns.

There were no instructions explaining the method of exchanging information between tables, but by following the examples provided, I was able to pass information between the tables, using the coding feature.

The major feature of the Informer, which sets it apart from other databases, is its forms screen.

This screen allows for the entering of all of the data that is to be used. It also allows the user to design his/her own graphics background. Graphics from DEGAS/DEGAS Elite, Neochrome and .IFF files can be used, so long as you're able to display them on a medium- or high-resolution screen. I point this out because the documentation states that you can use Neochrome pictures, but version 1.07 does not allow for pictures to be displayed directly to medium- or high-resolution. Your file for

phone numbers might display a telephone, or someone talking on one, to remind you of the file's purpose, or you might digitize a French chef as a background for your recipes files!

To test how easily, or quickly I could learn to use this program, I set about cataloging all articles on the ST in one my collections of magazines. The hardest part was to figure out what needed for a quick reference. The information used the title, author, date, type

of article, and description. I am now able to find information on any article, by author, type, or description, in a matter of minutes rather than the hours that it took previously. As was stated earlier, data in the Trialpak is limited to about 2K but this was enough for 30-35 entries in each file, and I created three such files for use, dating back to Dec '85.

The Informer is GEM-based, and many of the commands can be entered from the keyboard, as well as with the mouse. These commands include sorting files in ascending and descending order, saving data in ASCII format, printing files to disk and/or printer. Files can be imported from HabaView, Regent Base, and dbMan. Files can be exported to Regent Word II. The Trialpak's cost is deductible from the price of its big brother, "The Informer", should the user choose to upgrade.

-Reviewed by William Toliver-

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